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ABSTRACT

Self-report instruments developed to assess adherence to gender roles are usually culture bound and applicable only in a particular cultural context. The Kaschak-Sharratt Sex-Role Inventory (KSSRI) was developed as a Spanish-language instrument appropriate for use in a Latin American culture. This study investigated situational demands or context and their effect upon gender roles by administering the KSSRI to 50 male and 50 female Costa Rican university students from three universities. Subjects completed the KSSRI three times, imagining themselves in a social situation with a male friend, a female friend, or one male and one female friend. While overall scores for females were consistently androgynous and achieved by high scores in both masculinity and femininity, females did score higher in femininity in the situation involving the presence of a male and in-between in situations with both sexes present, supporting the notion that for women, the presence of a male results not in lowered masculine behaviors, but in increased feminine behaviors. Males scored significantly higher in masculinity in the situation involving a male friend than in one involving a female friend. The findings suggest that the presence of a male calls forth gender role stereotyped behavior in both females and males and that the presence of males alone or in a mixed situation limits feminine attributions for men. (NB)

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# GENDER ROLES IN COSTA RICA: THE EFFECT OF THE PRESENCE OF MALES OR FEMALES

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Gender Roles in Costa Rica:

The Effect of the Presence of Males or Females*

In recent years, there has been a great deal of interest among North American psychologists in the development and psychological ramifications of masculine and feminine gender roles, which, in turn, has led to the development of a number of instruments designed to assess adherence to these roles. Prominent among these have been the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (1974) and the Bem Sex Role Inventory (1974), both of which assess role attribution.

While a self-report instrument is quite useful in exploring the relationship between gender roles and a variety of other psychological and behavioral characteristics, it is also obviously culture bound and, thus, applicable only in that cultural context in which it has been developed.

The Kaschak-Sharratt Sex-Role Inventory is a Spanish-language instrument developed in a Latin American culture (Costa Rica) appropriate for use in that setting (Kaschak & Sharratt, 1983-84). This instrument can be used to assess the relationship between gender roles and a variety of other personality and behavioral variables and may be used as a prototype for development of such an instrument for use with

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Spanish-speaking subjects of other than Costa Rican origin. The instrument has been used in several prior studies in the United States, Costa Rica and Peru. Results are reported elsewhere (Kaschak & Sharratt, unpublished manuscript), as is the original development and standardization procedure (Kaschak & Sharratt, 1983-84).

This study, then, involved investigation of situational demands or context and their effect upon gender roles. It was hypothesized that gender role behavior for both males and females is not consistent, but is differentially influenced by context. The context manipulated in the present study was an interpersonal one, namely whether the subject was considering her or himself to be interacting with a male or a female. The authors hypothesized that traditional or gender role stereotyped behavior would be significantly more present when subjects of either gender were interacting with a male. In essence, it is then the presence of a male in a dyadic or triadic interaction that pulls for gender stereotypic self attributions. Additionally, it was considered imperative to analyze changes both in masculinity and in femininity scores in these contexts and not just in an overall difference or androgyny score.

A search of the literature did not reveal any studies of this nature conducted in Latin America or with Hispanic subjects in the United States. The authors, thus, consider this study as the beginning contribution to an attempt to introduce

greater complexity into our understanding of gender role behavior in Latin American and with Hispanic residents of the United States.

## Method

The current study involves the administration of the Kaschak-Sharratt Sex Role Inventory (KSSRI) to one hundred (100) Costa Rican university students in the following combination:

| | University 1 | University 2 | University 3 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| females | 17 | 15 | 18 | 50 |
| males | 18 | 15 | 17 | 50 |
| Total | 35 | 30 | 35 | 100 |

Thus, 50 males and 50 females participated in the study. University 1 consists of students drawn from the lower classes, University 2 from middle class backgrounds and University 3 from upper class backgrounds. University 1 is a rural, state subsidized institution; University 2 is a low tuition, public university located in the capital city; University 3 is a private institution with considerable tuition costs.

Each student was administered the KSSRI three different times. Each administration of the instrument was preceded by a different set of instructions. Essentially, the first set instructed the student to imagine her/himself in a social situation with a male friend, the second set with a female

friend, and the third with two friends, one male and one female. The order of the first two sets of instructions was counterbalanced. The situation involving both friends was always presented last as a control. Every attempt was made to get the subjects to imagine accurately enacting their behavior in such a situation. Each subject then rated her/himself on the attributes which comprise the KSSRI.

In the present study, it was hypothesized that individuals would rate themselves differently in a situation involving a male friend and a female friend in the following manner. It was and is our contention that the current gender role arrangements more directly serve the needs of males and that, as a result, more gender role stereotypic behaviors are present in subjects of both sexes when they are involved in a situation with a male friend. More specifically, it was hypothesized that:

1. In the situation involving a male friend, male subjects would score significantly higher in masculinity than in the situation involving a female friend.

2. In the situation involving a male friend, female subjects would score significantly higher in femininity than in the situation involving a female friend.

3. In the situation involving interaction with one male and one female friend, these same scores will be higher than with a male friend, but lower than with a female.

4. Finally, three levels of class membership were included in order to assess differentially the effect of class membership on masculinity, femininity and androgyny scores.

## Results

The data were analyzed by means of a 3-way ANOVA with repeated measures on one variable, the three interactional situations. Gender of respondent achieved significance ($F = 5.03$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$), as did the situation variable ($F = 4.84$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$) and the interaction between them ($F = 7.65$, $df = 2$, $p < .002$). Class membership, as a variable, did not achieve significance and was, thus, eliminated from the two post hoc ANOVAs. Two 2-way ANOVAs were then run to test the three hypotheses directly. With gender of respondent and the three interactional situations as independent variables, one ANOVA was run for masculinity scores and a second one for femininity scores.

With regard to masculinity scores, the situational variable achieved significance ($F = 5.67$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$), as did the interaction between gender and situation ($F = 4.51$, $df = 2$, $p = .05$).

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Insert Table 1 about here

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With regard to the first hypothesis, examination of the

means (Table 1) revealed that males did score significantly higher in masculinity in a situation involving a male friend than in one involving a female friend. For females, masculinity scores did not differ significantly. Interestingly, there was not a significant difference between the masculinity scores of male and female subjects as a whole. In the situation including both a male and a female friend, men attained scores not significantly different from those when in a situation alone with a female friend, although there was a slight trend in the predicted direction.

With regard to femininity scores, the gender of subject variable achieved significance ($F = 12.65$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$) along with the interaction between gender and the three situations ($F = 36.74$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$). In this case, examination of the means (Table 2) revealed that femininity scores for females were higher than for males in all conditions. Female subjects were significantly more feminine with a male friend and also fell in between with both friends. Thus, the second hypothesis was also supported. In addition and unexpectedly, men attributed significantly more feminine qualities to themselves in the situation with a female friend or fewer feminine ones in the situation with a male friend, if you will, and fell between the two when both genders were present.

Insert Table 2 about here

The third hypothesis then was supported for females with a nonsignificant trend in the predicted direction for males.

Finally, class difference did not prove to be a salient variable in this study.

## Discussion

An overall perusal of gender role scores of these subjects would indicate androgynous self attributions in all but one situation, that of males in the presence of other males, in which situation overall scores were masculine or traditionally gender role stereotyped. It is at this point that most analyses of gender role behavior stop, simply reporting that both male and female university students attributed androgynous behavior to themselves in all but one situation. However, the current study argues for the introduction of more complexity into gender role research, both in terms of contextual variables and of patterns of scores. And, indeed, such an analysis has provided a much richer and more complex picture of gender role behavior among Costa Rican university students.

While overall scores for females were consistently androgynous and achieved by high scores in both masculinity and femininity, analysis of separate patterns of scoring revealed that, indeed, females did score higher in femininity in the situation

involving the presence of a male and in between with both, thus supporting the notion that for women, the presence of a male results not in lowered masculine behaviors, but in increased feminine behaviors and qualities. As predicted, a mixed situation resulted in intermediate scores.

For males, the situation appears more complex in two important ways. First, while they did, as predicted, score higher in masculinity in the presence of another male, there was also a slight trend toward scores between the two same gender situations in the mixed situation. This result warrants further investigation, but may point to a difference in salience of the presence of both males and females for male and female subjects. That is, the mixed situation may be different in kind from the two one gender situations and not just a control or combination of both. This issue could be investigated, for example, by presenting a variety of mixed situations with different numerical combinations of males and females.

Although no hypotheses were originally offered concerning the cross gender scale for either males or females, these results are worth noting and exploring in future studies. While males scored much lower in femininity when with another male and in the mixed situation, females were able to behave in both masculine and feminine manners in all three situations. These results suggest that the presence of a male does, indeed, call forth gender role stereotyped behavior in both females and

males and that, in addition, the presence of males alone or in a mixed situation limits feminine attributions for men. This interesting result is in keeping with the notion that traditionally masculine behaviors are more acceptable for women than are traditionally feminine ones for men. These results suggest that this is so in Costa Rica, at least among university students. Thus, as hypothesized, traditional gender role behavior is most salient in the presence of a male friend and, for males, in addition, cross grade behaviors are least salient or acceptable.

Class differences did not exercise a significant influence upon the dependent variable, suggesting that these results may hold across class. However, class membership was assigned only by attendance at a particular university and may, thus, be characterized by some overlap. Thus, it is recommended that this variable be studied more rigorously in future investigations. Certainly the direction for future studies should involve actual in vivo manipulation of the variables studied herein through self-report.

Table 1

Mean Scores
of
Masculinity

| Subjects | Situations With Male | With Female | With Both |
|---|---|---|---|
| Males | 4.60 | 4.31 | 4.34 |
| Females | 4.44 | 4.41 | 4.46 |

Table 2

Mean Scores
of
Femininity

| Subjects | Situations With Male | With Female | With Both |
|---|---|---|---|
| Males | 3.62 | 4.26 | 3.92 |
| Females | 4.60 | 4.24 | 4.43 |

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